

# Tale

# Feathers

Nov 2001

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## Crows with White Wing Markings

by John Solodar

Nancy and I have been working with the Master Ecologists at Litzinger Road Ecology Center to broaden their knowledge of birds and bird identification. Thus we were not surprised when Phyllis, one of the members of this group, e-mailed us this summer with a bird description which had her puzzled. She described a large black bird, very similar to a crow and hanging out with crows, that had large white patches on its wings. A thorough search of National Geographic's "Birds of North America" had left her totally mystified as to the identification of this bird.

Fortunately, this identification turned out to be easy as I had seen a similar bird before. This was merely a crow with white wing patches. Unusual to be certain, but not unheard of. My first encounter with one of these unusual crows was in 1996 and 1997 when a crow with white patches on both wings, similar to those of a mockingbird, spent a lot of time at the then Monsanto parking lot at the corner of Warson Rd and

Olive Blvd. Even a non-birding friend noticed the abnormal markings and asked me what it was.

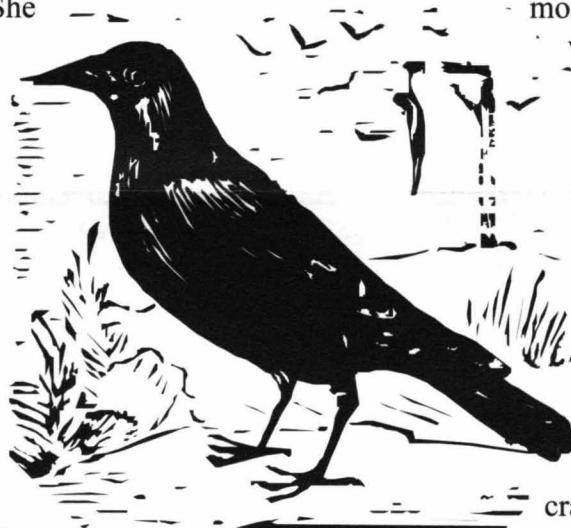
My second encounter was at home in University City when we had a crow that we called "white-wing" in residence for most of late 1997 - early

2001. We would see it most often in the winter when it came to dip pieces of bread in our heated bird-bath. This crow had a long white swath only on its left wing.

This summer we have had a juvenile crow driving its parents and us crazy with its incessant demands to be fed.

We know that it's been the same bird all summer because it has white wing patches of the same type as the old Monsanto crow.

Counting the bird that Phyllis observed, this makes four sightings of crows with white wing markings that we know of in the St. Louis area in the last four years. My guess is that there are quite a few more. These white patches are the result of a lack of pigmentation in a few feathers.



**St. Louis Audubon Society**

## Member Profiles

This month continues a long-term series of profiles of St Louis Audubon Board Members. Hopefully, getting to know current members, especially the board, will make it easier for you to know where and how you want to get involved.

***Mitch Leachman was elected to the board this past April.***

**How would you describe your educational background?**

I have a BS in engineering that I used in my first career. Recently, I have been preparing for my third career through several natural science classes and volunteer projects with other Audubon chapters, The Nature Conservancy, and a county parks department.

**How would you describe your current occupation?**

District manager for 7-Eleven, Inc.—retail has become my second career.

**What is your current function/role with SLAS?**

I am coordinating the development of a volunteer program with the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge and recently assumed leadership of the Programs Committee where I hope to greatly expand our offering of open meetings with discussion forums and speakers.

**What is your #1 conservation concern at any level, local to global?**

Overpopulation. Unchecked population growth, with the resultant resource demands, is the root cause of a large majority of the global habitat destruction. Technology alone cannot maintain the conservation strides made in recent decades without the reduction in the underlying pressure of the human population.

**In what ways can NAS or SLAS address this concern?**

Education is the only way, and Audubon seems to be about the only organization that has targeted it as a core mission. I think its crucial that as Audubon's plan for nationwide nature centers becomes a reality, the organization move beyond our borders to assist other countries in doing the same.

**What is your long-term vision/goals for SLAS?**

An organization that educates our local communities on conservation issues through hands-on volunteer projects, a variety of field trips, in-the-classroom experiences, and individual issue advocacy.

### **Get Published!**

The deadline for the Dec issue is Nov 10. Please send articles, events and letters to Anne.

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**EMERSON**  
**Special Thanks!**

# Conservation Report

— Sue Gustafson

For the last twelve years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been working to find a new way to manage its six big dams on the Missouri River. Last November, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Final Biological Opinion on Missouri River dam operations that called for an increase in springtime dam release and lower releases in the summer to prevent the extinction of the interior least tern, piping plover, and pallid sturgeon, and the further decline of many other native Missouri River species as required under the Endangered Species Act. The St. Louis Audubon Society board endorsed the Fish & Wildlife opinion. As recently as July 22nd, the Corps publicly stated its intention to include a preferred alternative in the draft environmental impact statement that would meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. The Corps has now issued the Missouri River Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS), and while *not* listing the Fish & Wildlife Opinion as a preferred alternative, the Corps does offer six alternatives now available for public review and comment.

Conservation groups in the Missouri River basin and around the country are continuing to push for changes in how the river is managed in an effort to restore some semblance of the river's natural flow. Four of the six alternatives call for flow changes out of the Gavins Point Dam, the southernmost dam on the Missouri, located near the South Dakota/Nebraska state line. Analysis of the effects of the six alternatives includes the effects on tern and plover habitat, river fish, recreation, flood control, interior drainage and groundwater, hydropower, navigation, and Mississippi River impacts. The effects of the "GP2021" alternative are expected to provide benefits to wildlife habitat similar to those of the Fish & Wildlife Opinion, and the SL Audubon Society board is therefore endorsing that alternative.

The Corps is hosting a series of public workshops and hearings in communities along the river where people can get information about the RDEIS. The **workshop in St. Louis** is scheduled for Tuesday, November 13 from 2 to 5 pm at the Radisson Hotel at 200 N. Fourth Street, downtown. From 7 to 10 pm that evening, the Corps will take official testimony. The Corps will take this input and other information and will develop a final EIS by May 2002, which will include the preferred option for changing how the dams are operated. To learn more about the importance of reforming dam operations on the Missouri River, to get more details about the Corps' RDEIS, and to find out how you can help secure the long-term health of the Missouri River, visit [www.savethemissouri.org](http://www.savethemissouri.org).

## Holiday Open House

Friends from the Webster Groves Nature Study Society will join us December 2nd at Washington University's Tyson Research Center for our annual Holiday Get-Together from 1-4pm. Come prepared with binoculars and cold weather gear for a hike in search of winter song birds, deer and turkey.

The spirit of the season is sure to be lively in the administration building's classroom where we can meet friends old and new. Please bring a dessert or an hors d'oeuvre and conversation to share. Tea, coffee, wine and soda will be provided.

We extend a special invitation to new members offering a chance to meet those active in the Societies and to enjoy the beautiful Ozark woods at Tyson. The Research Center is easy to find. Take I-44 west to the Antire road exit between Valley park and Eureka. Turn right from the exit road to the Research Center gate. Sign in with the gatekeeper and continue on the main road to the administration building. Turn right into the parking area.

Call Pat McCormick for more information at 636-825-2842.

# Audubon Society of Missouri's Fall Weekend

by Dency Kahn

In May, when the Audubon Society of Missouri came to St. Louis for their 100th anniversary, I helped with registration. I hadn't heard about ASM before, but I watched over one hundred birders from all over the state check in, go out on a multitude of bird walks, and have what appeared to be a very good time. I decided this was a good thing.

So in August, I paid the modest \$15 membership fee, and shortly after I registered for the Fall Weekend at Lake of the Ozarks State Park Sept. 28 - 30. The cost was \$50 for 2 nights and 6 meals. Three of us from St. Louis carpooled down. When we arrived, we found we were staying in organized group camping, which means we were in cabins with 16 bunks and a separate room for the counselors. Only the bottom bunks were used, and the cabins were segregated by sex. As directed, we brought our own towels and bedding. We wondered what the meals would be like. They were great! For an example, Friday night was mostaccioli with salad and steamed broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots, with iced tea and homemade Halloween cookies for dessert. There were programs both evenings, bird-walks Saturday and Sunday, and perfect weather in a lovely setting.

I should mention that there weren't too many birds. The weather was so nice that migrating birds flew on through. I saw a barred owl, red-breasted nuthatches, an osprey, and Northern parul and black-throated green warblers.

Also lots of chickadees and titmice. But we all had a great time and plan to return.

Check out the Audubon Society of Missouri ([www.mobirds.org/](http://www.mobirds.org/)). In addition to the Fall Weekend always held at Lake of the Ozarks, there is a Spring Weekend with a rotating location (2002 is Columbia). Membership also gets you a subscription to "The Bluebird". Other services provided are the Birds Record Committee, and mo-birds, the e-mail distribution list for Missouri birders.

I plan to be in Columbia the last weekend of April. Maybe I'll see you there!



## Minnesota in the Winter is GOOD birding

By Jim Malone

The British claim that there is no bad weather, just improper clothing. We hope to put that idea to the test this coming January 23-27 in the Duluth, Minnesota area. St. Louis Audubon Society is offering an extended week-end trip to this area for a real winter birding extravaganza. Winter birding in this area can offer great views of Owls (like Great Gray, Snowy, Northern Hawk, and even Boreal are possible). Passerine feeder birds like Crossbills, Redpolls, Siskins, Boreal Chickadees, Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, and Bohemian Waxwings are also winter residents of this region. Northern Goshawks, Gyrfalcons, Barrow's Goldeneyes, and a great selection of gulls are also possible on this trip. Our visit to Minnesota will be based in Duluth (where we will stay) and we will visit many of the great birding locations in the Duluth, MN and Superior, WS area including harbors, landfills (yes, you can find gulls at the dump in winter), grain elevators, and neighborhoods. We will also spend time in Aitkin county where the famed Sax/Zim bog regularly has wintering owls, raptors, and lots of other surprises. Participants will be responsible for their own transportation on this trip, but once you are there we will take you to all of the best birding locations. January 23rd and 27th are travel days, leaving us Thursday, Friday, and Saturday for intensive birding. If this trip sounds good to you, contact Jim Malone at [stlaud@surfbest.net](mailto:stlaud@surfbest.net) or at (636)536-1119 to reserve a space now.

# Birding Activities with St. Louis Audubon Society

By Jim Malone

During September and October, we had a series of great bird walks, and lots of fun. This year's Carlyle Pelagic trip had 41 participants. We began the day in the woods at Hazlett State park, and enjoyed a great selection of birds throughout the park. Among the trees at this location we saw (or heard) White-eyed, Yellow-throated, Philadelphia, and Red-eyed vireos, and warblers including Tennessee, Nashville, Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Palm, Black-and-white, and Wilson's. For the Pelagic portion of our trip, we rented 4 pontoon boats and chummed the lake (with popcorn) to bring in the gulls. Unfortunately, the Sabine's gulls forgot to come. We did have another very good bird sighting while on the lake, however. Nearly everyone got great views of a juvenile Red-necked Phalarope (a like bird for many). We ended the day on the north end of the lake at parking lot #3. Here we saw an impressive variety of shorebirds including Sanderlings, Yellowlegs, Black-bellied and American Golden Plovers, Baird's and Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Everyone had a great time and we didn't lose anyone in the mud! On Oct. 6th, we visited 2 Rivers National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Illinois. We were very fortunate to be joined by Mike Dickson from US Fish and Wildlife, who let us into areas we normally do not have access to. On Gilbert Lake, we had a great selection of ducks including Wood ducks, Mallards, Pintails, Gadwalls, Wigeons, Shovelers, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, and a pair of Lesser Scaup. The woods and waterways also offered up a good variety of shorebirds, a few passerines, a huge flock of American White Pelicans, and three Bald Eagles. If these trips sounded like fun to you, join us on some of these.

**November 10 (Saturday) Riverlands EDA, 8 AM** Situated on the Mississippi River, Riverlands gets large numbers and good variety of waterfowl beginning in the fall. In addition to the ducks, we can see great raptors (like an occasional Peregrine Falcon or Rough-legged Hawk), gulls, terns, and even Jaegers are possible. This walk will be the first walk of this calendar suitable for birding from wheelchairs. The areas we will be visiting will include short walks on paved surfaces, and much birding from the cars or immediately outside of them. To get to the meeting point, take route 367 North from I-270. At the Missouri side of the Clark bride (which crosses the Mississippi), turn right at the Fisca gas station to enter Riverlands. Travel about 1/2 mile to the area office on the left side of the road. We will meet in this parking lot.

**November 18 (Sunday) Horseshoe Lake, 8 AM.** We will return to Horseshoe Lake to look for waterfowl, sparrows, hawks, gulls, and other birds. This outing will involve small amounts of walking on paved level ground, with most birding from the car (or nearby). To get to the meeting point, take I-70 East from St. Louis. After passing the I-70/I-64 split, take the exit for highway 111. Turn left (North) and follow 111 about 2-3 miles to the Park entrance on the left. We will meet at the first parking lot on the right side of the main drive. To get to the meeting point, take I-70 East from St. Louis.

After passing the I-70/I-64 split, take the exit for highway 111. Turn left (North) and follow 111 about 2-3 miles to the Park entrance on the left. We will meet at the first parking lot on the right side of the main drive.

**December 8 (Saturday) Riverlands EDA, 1 PM.** Beginning last year we added an afternoon trip to Riverlands in December to take advantage of the birds which are more active during this time of day. We will explore the river looking for gulls, eagles, and waterfowl. We will also search some of the weedy areas along the road (and near the office) to see what sparrow activity there is. As the sun goes down, we will watch the ducks come to the Heron pond to roost for the night and scan the grassy fields hoping to find Short-eared Owls. To get to the meeting point, take route 367 North from I-270. At the Missouri side of the Clark bride (which crosses the Mississippi), turn right at the Fisca gas station to enter Riverlands. Travel about 1/2 mile to the area office on the left side of the road. We will meet in this parking lot.

*Enjoy Life! Go Birding !!*

# Missouri Environmental Fund Joins in a Partnership With Earth Share

by Jim Holsen

The Missouri Environmental Fund, organized about six years ago, conducts payroll giving campaigns for its 27 member organizations, all Missouri environmental not-for-profit groups, in the same way that the United Way collects contributions for its member charities. The St. Louis Audubon Society, a founding member of the Fund, has received over eight thousand dollars in contributions since the incorporation of the Fund.

Employees pledging a contribution to the Fund may designate that their contribution goes to one or more of the member organizations, or they may designate that their contribution goes directly to the Fund, in which case it is distributed equally among the member organizations..

So far, the Fund has been most successful in gaining access to employee giving campaigns in local, state and federal agencies. It has been more difficult to gain access to corporate payroll giving campaigns, where the majority of employees are to be found.

United Way, with board members including the CEOs of major corporations, has actively discouraged its corporate members from opening their payroll giving campaigns to environmental and similar funds.

Now, after several years of negotiations, the 15 state and regional environmental funds, including the Missouri Environmental Fund, have joined in an affiliate partnership with Earth Share, a national organization collecting payroll giving pledges for national environmental organizations. Familiar member

organizations in Earth Share include The Nature Conservancy, The Sierra Club Foundation, and the National Audubon Society. Earth Share has had greater success in gaining access to corporate payroll giving campaigns at companies doing business nation-wide.

The partnership, announced in a national news release on September 12, but lost in the news of the tragedy that occurred on the day before, requires that the Missouri Environmental Fund change its name to Earth Share of Missouri, but it otherwise retains its independent board of directors and co-executive directors, Jerry Klamona and Laura Neuman. Earth Share of Missouri will continue to solicit payroll contributions for its member organizations, but will, in addition, run the payroll giving campaigns in Missouri for Earth Share, retaining for itself a portion of the pledges.

Earth Share will be reorganized so that its Board of Directors will include representatives of the 15 state and regional environmental funds entering into the partnership. Earth Share gains a local presence by having groups such as the newly-named Earth Share of Missouri represent it in local and state-wide payroll giving campaigns.

Surveys show that ninety-five percent of contributors to Earth Share had not previously contributed to environmental causes, so there is a large group of corporate employees eager to contribute if they can only be reached through corporate campaigns. Employees can help by urging their employers to participate in the payroll-giving campaigns of Earth Share of Missouri.

Additional information and recent news releases can be found at the Earth Share of Missouri web site: [www.earthsharemo.org](http://www.earthsharemo.org).

## San Diego Bird Festival FEBRUARY 7-10 2002

More than 190 birds seen  
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## BIRD WITH THE EXPERTS

*Paul Bauer and the St. Louis Audubon*

Experience a bird's eye view of the world under the expert wing of Paul Bauer on one of St. Louis Audubon Society's many exciting birding expeditions to Africa:

**BIRD TANZANIA** February 28-March 10, 2002 and experience the greatest thrill in all of Africa: the miracle of the migration in the Serengeti at its peak. Escorted by expert birder and perennial favorite Francis Kitayi, you can expect to see over 300 species of birds while also visiting Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater and Oldupai Gorge.

**BIRD KENYA** in June 2002 on a budget classic birding safari. Francis Kitayi will also be by your side as you experience exciting birding and wildlife viewing in Samburu, Lake Nakuru, and the legendary Maasi Mara. Extensions available to Tanzania and Western Kenya.

**BIRD SOUTH AFRICA** October 11-21, 2002 in their spring with Ken Newman, renowned ornithologist and author. Bird in open vehicles in Hluhluwe, Ndumo, and Mala Mala private games reserves. An option extension is also available to Cape Town.

FOR ITINERARIES OR MORE INFORMATION , CONTACT:

Paul Bauer at (314) 921-3972

## A FALL AND WINTER BIRDING FESTIVAL

Saturday, November 17; 2:00-4:00pm

Sunday, November 18; optional field trip

Reservations required staring October 31, 2001

For all ages, a new 3-part program on how to best enjoy Fall and winter birding adventures presented as a joint effort of the St. Louis Audubon Society and Powder Valley Nature Center.

**2-3pm** An interactive classroom session for children 6 and up (with parents!) Illustrating the parts of a bird and their function; the life cycle of a bird; environmental effects on birds and how you can help. (Limit 50)

**3-4pm.** An auditorium program sharing a superb video illustrating how to improve existing bird watching skills , followed by slides of the best fall and winter birding locations around St. Louis. Several handouts will be available, including directions to the Sunday field trip. (Limit 200)

**Sunday 8-11am.** A field trip at one of the best nearby areas to see over 20 kinds of ducks and other water birds. (Limit 50)

Scores of ducks and geese are arriving each week from the north; bald eagles will be following soon. Bird watching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in America. Join us for this special 3-part program and start enjoying fall and winter birding adventures.

RESERVATIONS BEGIN OCTOBER 31; CALL (314) 301-1500

## Tale Feathers

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## St. Louis Audubon Society 2001 - 2002

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## St. Louis Audubon Society Membership Form

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